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ABSTRACT

The main focus of this paper is to illustrate how West Point (New York) equips future U.S. Army officers with an appreciation and understanding of cultural knowledge. A unique, multidisciplinary goal-based approach to curricular design and assessment of students, as well as the academic program, is described, focusing on the structure, process, and content of student experiences that contribute to the achievement of the cultural perspectives goal. The paper reviews what the institution's assessment data are telling them about student achievement of this goal and how they use this evidence to improve the academic quality of the curriculum. The paper draws informative lessons from the experience, particularly in terms of models and processes that may prove helpful for other colleges and universities throughout the United States that are striving to ensure their undergraduates acquire a robust cultural perspective. (Contains 4 figures, 2 tables, and 11 references.) (Author/BT)

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TEACHING CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES TO FUTURE ARMY OFFICERS AT WEST POINT

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The main concern of this paper is to illustrate how West Point equips future Army officers with an appreciation and understanding of cultural knowledge. A unique, multidisciplinary goal-based approach to curricular design and assessment (of students as well as the academic program) is described, focusing on the structure, process and content of student experiences that contribute to the achievement of the Cultural Perspectives goal. The author reviews what the institution's assessment data are telling us about student achievement of this goal and how we use this evidence to improve the academic quality of the curriculum. And finally, the paper draws informative lessons from our experience, particularly in terms of models and processes that may prove helpful for other colleges and universities throughout the United States that are striving to ensure their undergraduates acquire a robust cultural perspective.

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Introduction

The United States Military Academy – commonly referred to by its geographically-related shorthand "West Point" – is a truly unique institution of the higher education landscape of the United States. As training grounds for future officers of the United States Army, West Point maintains the highest standards of academic, military, and physical education. Students who attend this institution are uniquely dedicated to the principles of service and discipline, and are among the most qualified high school graduates attending any academic institution in the United States.

This paper describes the unique, multidisciplinary goal-based approach to curricular design and assessment at West Point, focusing on the structure, process and content of student experiences that contribute to the achievement of the Cultural Perspectives goal. Clearly, gaining an appreciation for culture has never been more important than in today's globally interdependent environment. This discussion will first provide an overview of the unique institutional context and the Academic Program at the Military Academy. This is followed by a description of one of these goals – developed a cadet's cultural perspective – which covers issues of definition, goal development and implementation, and student outcomes assessment. Thus, the conclusion of this paper draws some important lessons we have learned from our multidisciplinary efforts in developing our student's cultural knowledge.

I. The Institutional Context

West Point was the first service academy in the United States, established by Congress in 1802. With its focus on service to the nation, the curriculum at West Point has been modified at various times to meet the anticipated future needs of the Army, the nation, and higher education. Once almost exclusively focused on civil engineering – providing the foundation for service in the Corps of Engineers and Field Artillery – the curriculum now balances the physical sciences and engineering with the humanities and the social sciences to lay the educational foundation for commissioned leadership in the 21st Century Army.

West Point maintains a commitment to educational excellence, and achieves the highest standards in collegiate education. West Point has graduated 56 Rhodes Scholars, placing it squarely in the same league as Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and Princeton Universities. Our Model United Nations team is ranked top in the nation, and the Engineering department has been rated among the top five in the nation for decades. The Military Academy is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and the engineering and computer science programs are accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.

While many excellent colleges and universities have educational goals similar to those of the United States Military Academy, the institution's relationship with the U.S. Department of Defense adds a dimension that makes West Point unique. As the sole institution of higher education in the nation whose primary responsibility is to educate cadets for career service as professional Army officers, West Point incorporates a dynamic, challenging, and integrated curriculum, organized around a set of interdisciplinary goals drawn directly from Army needs. Toward this end, the purpose of the curriculum is to set the intellectual foundation for a lifetime of service as a commissioned officer in the Army and – like other aspects of the West Point experience – is designed to inspire and foster development in leadership, moral courage, and integrity essential to such service.

The Academic Program at West Point is conceptually based on our understanding of what the Army requires of its leaders. Army officers must be leaders of character, loyal to the values of the nation and the profession of arms, possessing the wisdom to know what is right, and demonstrating the courage and commitment to act accordingly. Equally important, they must develop in subordinates and units a competitive spirit and a determination to accomplish the mission. They must lead by example to earn the trust and respect of subordinates. The reality of rapid change requires officers to be self-directed learners who update and expand their knowledge through self-study, continued formal education, and experience.

In preparing officers for the Army of the future, West Point seeks to produce graduates who are "both aware of the breadth, depth, and limits of their own understanding and confident in their ability to undertake self-directed, independent study to meet the challenges of new activities and ideas . . . able to communicate effectively new ideas and insights, generalize or infer new principles about the world, and apply these inferences appropriately . . . [and also able] to recognize and appreciate diverse perspectives on complex situations, and employ an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the causes of the challenges they face and the consequences of their actions." (USMA Dean's Office, 2002).

Particularly in today's world of global terrorism, the nation requires a military capable of anticipating and responding to a dynamic national security environment. Leading a diverse Army engaged around the globe, meeting the demands of diverse missions across the operational spectrum, and dealing with complex technologies—this is what West Point graduates will be doing in the future. While West Point cannot possibly train its graduates for the plethora of possible situations that may confront them throughout their careers, the curriculum must educate them broadly so that they will be able to anticipate and respond appropriately to the social, political, economic, and technological challenges that will most certainly arise in a ever-changing global arena. Achieving such lofty goals requires a unique mixture of faculty, programs, resources, and students.

Faculty

The faculty at West Point are a blend of senior military personnel, rotating military personnel, and civilians who reflect the richness of the Army and American society. The senior military personnel serve as the permanent faculty and departmental leadership, and the Academic Dean is often chosen from among them every five years and subsequently retired from the Army at the end of their term.

Officers and non-commissioned officers who serve on a three-year rotating or short-term basis form the majority of the West Point staff and faculty. The Academy aggressively recruits the Army's top junior officers and non-commissioned officers, and requires them to apply for advanced civil schooling and assignment to West Point to serve as tactical officers, instructors, and members of the staff. They are selected for their demonstrated professional excellence and their ability to complete graduate education. This process is of paramount importance not only to the Academy's mission, but also serves to promote intellectual development among the Army's officer corps. As a result of their advanced civil schooling and developmental experiences at West Point, these officers will return to the Army with a more comprehensive understanding of their profession and will be equipped and inspired to serve in increasingly senior levels of leadership.

Civilian faculty are recruited for their demonstrated scholarly achievements and potential, their subject matter expertise, and their enthusiasm for teaching and developing cadets, both in

and outside the classroom. Civilian faculty also provide some level of continuity – while the majority of faculty are on three-year tours of duty, civilians are offered a mix of 3- and 6-year renewable appointments. Similar to their military faculty colleagues, civilians are offered a variety of opportunities for personal and professional growth, and are encouraged to develop a portfolio of achievements that merit advancement in academic rank similar to the best colleges and universities in the nation. There are five domains of faculty responsibilities: teaching, research, service, cadet development, and faculty development. Although West Point does not have a tenure system, superior performance in these five domains of faculty responsibilities normally leads to renewable, longer-term appointments. While the first three domains are common to most institutions, the other two are relatively unique. The responsibility of cadet development implies that all faculty will assume a role as club advisor, student group mentor, or some other cadet support role outside the classroom. As well, all faculty are expected to contribute to the professional development of their colleagues, whether that be leading a workshop on developing web pages, collaborating on a research project, or working with a new faculty member to improve his or her teaching abilities.

In general, all members of the staff and faculty are expected to contribute to a developmental system that places a premium on educating cadets and inspiring them to careers as commissioned officers. West Point's student-centered approach to teaching and learning demands a high level of teamwork and faculty collaboration, which in turn lends great power to the curriculum and assessment coordination efforts.

Students

Unlike most colleges and universities in the U.S., students at the service academies have a fairly clear understanding of what is expected of them, and why they are willing to try to meet those expectations. As a result, the faculty at these institutions enjoy a higher concentration of motivated and intelligent students than one might find at other institutions. West Point received 9,895 applicants for the class of 2005, and of those 1,189 were accepted, with an average SAT score of 1248 – well above the national average. Over 80 percent of the class of 2005 ranked in the top 20 percent of their high school class, two-thirds earned recognition by national honor societies, nearly 15% were either valedictorians or salutatorians, and nearly 80 percent were high school varsity athletes. These and other enrollment data reflect why West Point is consistently rated among the most selective universities and colleges in the nation.

For nearly two hundred years, the basic structure of the cadet experience at West Point has combined academic, military, and physical development with professional leadership training and cohort groups – an approach known as "the Thayer method," referring to the Academy's Superintendent Sylvanus Thayer from 1817 to 1833. Thus, West Point's academic program is closely coordinated with the physical and military education programs to help cadets develop professional self-concepts as officers, nurturing each cadet's competence, character, and confidence to act on matters of national security on behalf of the nation. The content and process of cadet education and development within the Academic Program help cadets to understand the four interrelated roles of a commissioned officer—warfighter, military professional, servant of the nation, and leader of character—and to incorporate these roles into their own emerging professional identities.

West Point cadets are kept incredibly busy. Arising at 5:30am, cadets line up for morning formation at 6:40, from which they march to breakfast in the grand Washington Hall, where meals can be served to over 4,000 cadets in minutes. Mornings are dedicated to traditional

classroom instruction, and afternoons are filled with meetings, intramural sports, physical development activities, military training exercises, and academic projects. Dinner at West Point is followed by club meetings, cadet corps leadership and organizational meetings, and other activities. Many cadets are able to fit in just a few hours of studying each night. The day is finally over at midnight, with "lights out" – meaning, the overhead light in all rooms should be off by that hour. On several occasions, one finds cadets up well past midnight studying under the pale glow of a desk reading lamp.

West Point offers over 120 clubs and extracurricular organizations, and twenty-five percent of the Academy's students are intercollegiate athletes. A proud history is demonstrated throughout the year by pageantry such as cadet parades and special events. Cadet discipline and neatness is enforced daily, which supports a rather unique teaching and learning environment: unlike some students at many civilian colleges, you will never see a cadet at West Point showing up late to class with a bag of chips and soda, "kicking back" and visibly tuning in and out of the day's lecture. In sum, a unique combination of mission, faculty and students come together at West Point to frame a unique Academic Program.

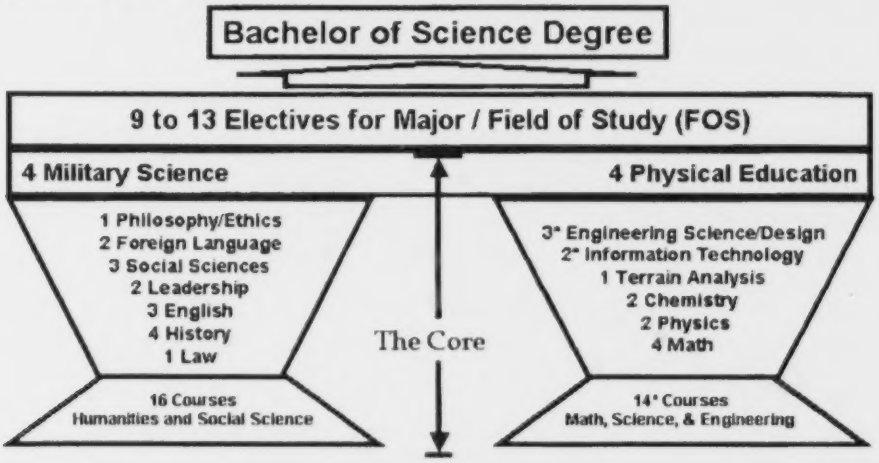
II. The Multidisciplinary Academic Program

The story is told of a well-respected scholar giving a presentation at a national academic conference in the 1980s, wherein he describes an unidentified institution with a general education core curriculum comprised of courses in the humanities, foreign language, and the physical and social sciences. The speaker provides an account of how the faculty at this institution have collaboratively developed this seemingly traditional liberal arts curriculum in a somewhat non-traditional fashion, focusing on a well-defined set of multidisciplinary educational goals and student outcomes instead of the more common framework of formulaic course menu distribution. At the end of his presentation, the speaker asks his listeners to identify the institution, and they call out the names of highly-regarded private liberal arts college throughout the Northeast and Midwest. The speaker smiles at their suggestions, and to their gasps of surprise, reveals his secret–he has just described the academic program at the United States Military Academy.

Indeed, many higher education observers are surprised to discover that the general educational experience for West Point cadets is highly comparable to that of the many well-regarded liberal arts institutions in the world. The curriculum at West Point balances the physical sciences and engineering with the humanities and the social sciences, and incorporates interdisciplinary opportunities for analyzing, problem solving, and decision-making that are fundamental to successful performance of duty as a commissioned Army officer.

To meet the Army's needs, the Academic Program's curriculum stresses both the acquisition of knowledge and the development of higher-order cognitive skills, and has two principal structural features (see Figure 1). The first is a broad set of core courses, which provide an intellectual foundation for service as a commissioned officer. These core courses, when combined with others in the Physical Education and Military Education Programs, constitute the Military Academy's "professional major." The second is a set of concentrated elective courses in a field of study or optional major, which provide cadets with the opportunity to specialize in a discipline of their choice. Upon completion of the program all cadets receive a bachelor of science degree (as directed by Congress, Title 10, USC, Section 9.02.a).

Figure 1: West Point's Academic Program



The diversity of tasks undertaken by the Army requires leaders whose education is grounded solidly in both the social and physical sciences. These requirements, and the accumulated experience of two centuries of preparing officers to meet the Army's needs, support the retention of a broad core curriculum, one that meets the multiple challenges of ethical service and provides cadets with the foundation for continued professional development. Core courses at West Point are designed, taught, and assessed in a uniquely collaborative fashion. Unlike a typical college or university, where an instructor has a fair amount flexibility in the classroom even for core curriculum courses, faculty at West Point work together to produce a common course syllabus and learning materials, to ensure that all graduates of the academy receive a comparable academic experience and knowledge. The collaboration between core course directors and course section instructors helps offset the challenges presented by a rotating junior military faculty.

The distribution and content of these 30 required core courses is driven by Academic Program Goals, developed by teams of faculty throughout the Academy. The entire Academic Program is guided by a single overarching goal: *to enable its graduates to anticipate and to respond effectively to the uncertainties of a changing technological, social, political, and economic world.* From this goal, the Military Academy derives a set of ten specific academic program goals that address specific Army needs and reflect the attributes that the Academy seeks to develop in its graduates (see Figure 2).

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Figure 2: West Point's Academic Program Goals

Overarching Goal of the Academic Program: Graduates will anticipate and respond effectively to the uncertainties of a changing technological, social, political, and economic world.

Upon achieving this overarching goal, graduates will be able to:

- think and act creatively,
- recognize moral issues and apply ethical considerations in decision-making,
- listen, read, speak, and write effectively,
- demonstrate the capability and desire to pursue progressive and continued intellectual development,

and demonstrate proficiency in six domains of knowledge:

- Engineering and Technology
- Math and Science
- Information Technology
- Historical Perspective
- Cultural Perspective
- Understanding Human Behavior

Source: USMA Office of the Dean. 2002. *Educating Future Army Officers for a Changing World.*

The achievement and integration of these ten Academic Program goals enables graduates to meet the overarching goal. Each goal is developed and managed by a team of faculty, representing departments and disciplines that are seen as contributing to the achievement of the goal. For example, the "Understanding Human Behavior" goal team is comprised of members from the following academic departments: behavioral sciences, law, social sciences, foreign languages, and cultural geography. These Goal Teams meet throughout the year to discuss the needs of the Army, the courses that attribute to the achievement of their respective goals, and ways in which the Academy can measure the degree to which their goal has been achieved. The leader of each Goal Team sits on the Assessment Steering Committee, a permanent council of senior faculty who meet weekly throughout the academic year to review overarching policies and results of the academic assessment system. It is important to note that in most cases, Goal Team leaders are not department heads, thus helping to avoid the mistaken perception of an administrative top-down approach to managing the Academy's curriculum.

The implementation of the Academic Program goals is organized around a set of learning models – theoretical statements outlining the conditions by which students learn and develop with respect to a particular educational goal. These learning models provide a conceptual foundation to guide the selection and arrangement of cadets' experiences (both formal and informal) that are intended to promote their achievement of the Academic Program's goals.

Explicitly acknowledged in a learning model are statements about the structure, process, and content of the curriculum that lead to cadets' achievement of each respective goal. The structure of learning experiences represents the domain of student inquiry. The domain serves as a framework to elucidate the areas of study, units of analysis, and ties to other curricular goals necessary to promote intellectual development. The process of learning experiences represents the activities students engage in to achieve the goal. These activities are organized in a sequential

pattern to document the progression of learning from an introduction of the material through the achievement of the goal. The content of learning experiences represents the substance of activities in which students will engage. Substance refers to the specific types of information to which students will be exposed that is consistent with both the structure and process of learning.

Faculty and cadets share responsibility for learning and development. The faculty organizes programs and courses to achieve explicit goals that relate directly to one or more of the Academic Program goals. Faculty members provide inspiration, guidance, and relevant learning resources to support cadet inquiry, understanding, and intellectual growth. In general, cadets develop their understanding of basic ideas and concepts through individual and collective study outside of class, supported by a robust information infrastructure, library resources, and learning support activities. With each subsequent year, cadets are increasingly challenged to take greater responsibility for their own learning as the process of cadet education gradually shifts from an emphasis on acquiring knowledge to an emphasis on structuring and using knowledge to deal effectively with challenging new questions, issues, and problems. As cadets progress, self-assessment and peer assessment complement assessments by faculty members, enhancing the cadets' self-awareness, competence, and confidence as self-directed learners.

The collaboration and shared responsibility inherent in this curricular approach is essential for developing cadet's ability to achieve the multidisciplinary goals articulated in West Point's Academic Program. An important example is seen in the development, implementation and assessment of the Cultural Perspective goal.

III. The Cultural Perspective Goal

The faculty team responsible for developing and managing the Cultural Perspective goal faced an important early challenge in reaching a consensus on how culture is defined. Clearly, many different definitions of culture exist in contemporary writings. The term "culture" can be viewed as an inherently multidisciplinary concept – no single discipline or field of study can honestly lay claim to being the exclusive source of a student's development in this cognitive dimension. The team eventually agreed upon a definition of culture as a shared way of life that is passed on to new members of a group. Cultures emerge in any group of people with a history, from a small cluster to an entire society. These cultures, and indeed subcultures within cultures, emerge as a product of human interaction around efforts to make sense of existence and to meet the needs of the group. To fully comprehend how people think, feel, act, and communicate, one must consider the cultural context of the group.

An analysis of culture involves the study of both the substance and forms of culture. The substance of culture includes beliefs, values, and norms that are emotionally laden and interrelated in such a way that they bind a collectivity of human beings together and help them to make sense of their physical and social environments (USMA, Office of the Dean, 2002). Cultural forms include symbols, language, narratives, and practices. These various forms communicate cultural substance. Cultural artifacts, such as art, music, language, architecture, and manner of dress, are manifestations of culture. It is the culture's specific ways of living that give meaning to these artifacts. Subcultures and countercultures emerge within cultures to represent groups of people whose needs are not fully met by the larger culture. Such groups may be formed on the basis of a wide variety of perceived common characteristics, such as ethnic or racial identity, socio-economic status, or even similar beliefs or interests (USMA, Office of the Dean, 2002). This multidimensional definition of culture frames our understanding of why it is crucial for West Point graduates to develop and demonstrate cognitive abilities in this area.

Culture both reflects and shapes human thought, action, and feelings. Because leaders must understand people to influence behavior and to operate effectively in different environments, the recognition of the fundamental elements of culture is a necessary attribute for our graduates. Moreover, given that Army officers are likely to experience a greater variety of cultural environments both at home and abroad during the 21st century, a broadened cultural perspective becomes essential. Demographic projections suggest that the composition of personnel in the Army will represent an increasingly greater proportion of ethnic minorities. At the same time, the Army is likely to be involved in more frequent peacekeeping missions, disaster relief efforts, and other stability and support operations that will require engagement with other cultures to ensure mission success and protect our national interests.

From a cultural perspective, the current global environment creates a particularly challenging dilemma for the professional officer. During a career, officers will be engaged in diverse missions in many different regions of the world. These missions demand a sophisticated understanding of the beliefs, values, and norms influencing the actions of allies, neutrals, and enemies. Because graduates may serve anywhere in the world, they cannot possibly know beforehand every culture or subculture that may become relevant to their professional responsibilities. Yet, they can apply their understanding of cultures they know to the process of learning about new cultures and subcultures they may encounter at home and abroad. By the same token, Army officers must understand the people they lead, follow, support, and serve. Insofar as they will work in an environment of joint and coalition operations, they will necessarily lead people, organize resources, interact with people from other cultures, and maintain a high state of readiness. To succeed, Army officers must understand the context of their social world, what motivates human behavior, and how to influence such motivations.

Finally, a cognizance of cultures, both one's own and other cultures, can enable each graduate to become a more informed citizen of character. Persons willing and able to see the world from others' perspectives and not just from their own narrow view of social reality are more successful at overcoming ethnocentrism and prejudice. Graduates who have been exposed to different cultures are more likely to respect other people and appreciate similarities and differences in the way others think, act, and appear.

How West Point Develops a Cadet's Cultural Perspective

All successful curricular initiatives in higher education are based upon expectations of student outcomes. Thus, the Cultural Perspective goal team developed a succinct goal statement describing the institution's expectations for what West Point cadets should be able to demonstrate upon graduation. A single, succinct goal statement – "Graduates draw from an appreciation of culture to understand in a global context human behavior, achievement, and ideas" – frames our expectations of what cadets should achieve in this area. West Point graduates who achieve this goal appreciate both the diversity in American culture and the challenges of performing global duties in a multicultural environment. Their appreciation of American pluralism prepares them to lead soldiers of diverse backgrounds and to adapt to changing national security objectives. Their awareness of global multicultural issues enables them to meet the demands of professional duties in an uncertain future that requires their service around the world. A successful graduate will be able to draw upon an understanding of culture to assist in the accomplishment of the tasks required of a leader of character. That is, leaders must be able to apply cultural knowledge in order to successfully perform their assigned duties.

Four goal statements were developed by the Goal Team to further refine our expectations

of West Point graduates in this dimension. Upon graduation, cadets should be able to demonstrate an ability to: (1) analyze contemporary and historical events from different cultural perspectives; (2) apply understanding of culture in contexts around the world; (3) understand diversity among people at home and abroad; and (4) view the world from the perspective of someone in another cultures. These four "What Graduates Can Do" statements thus describe the expected outcomes that frame the implementation and assessment of the Cultural Perspective goal.

The implementation strategy for the Cultural Perspective goal is derived from a learning model – a conceptual map which describes the structure, process and content – for how to best ensure student development in a desired dimension. Throughout their four years at the United States Military Academy, cadets are exposed to the pluralism of American society and also have opportunities to interact with international cadets and officers. These encounters and other extracurricular experiences supplement the curriculum and extend cadet cultural awareness. At West Point, cadets are challenged within both domestic and international contexts to develop their ability to examine and respect the elements of culture – e.g., beliefs, ideologies, aesthetics; institutions; social structures; technological manifestations; influencing factors; and change mechanisms (USMA, Office of the Dean, 2002).

In terms of the process of learning and the content of different disciplines, cadet experiences emphasize both professional application (leadership in a changing technological, social, political, and economic world) and personal growth (human fulfillment and respect of others). Within the constraints of a four-year curriculum, cadets experience culture in many ways. Throughout their coursework, cadets study cultural elements in different cultural contexts and analyze contemporary, political, and historical events from different cultural perspectives. Mandatory foreign language training encourages cadets to participate in various aspects of culture (e.g., speaking the language, interpreting the literature, and internalizing the culture).

Throughout their curricular and extracurricular activities, cadets learn to apply their knowledge and understanding of culture to simulated and real-world encounters in order to extend their academic learning, broaden their appreciation of diversity, and prepare themselves for the challenges of national service as citizens and leaders. Within the Academic Program at West Point, many disciplines within the humanities and social sciences introduce cadets to a variety of pluralistic and multicultural experiences. The core curriculum directly supports the learning model, which outlines relevant applications of the cultural perspective goal. Cadets' education and training encompass formal learning and cultural contacts that promote firsthand understanding of the variety and richness of human culture. This experience assists both their development as professional military officers and their development as citizens in a global setting.

There is a general hierarchy and sequence to the humanities and social science courses, and one basic science course that support the learning model. There are two clusters within the hierarchical learning model that lead cadets from 1) introductory levels of substance, theory, and methodology in the humanities—an "awakening" to the possibilities of cultural perspectives—to 2) more broadly based analysis in the social sciences. Cadets are exposed to the introductory cluster during their first two years, with core courses such as Introductory Psychology, Physical Geography, World History, American Politics, and a year of study in a foreign language of their choosing. The second analytic cluster is taken during their last two years at the Academy, within such courses as Leadership, Advanced Composition, Constitutional and Military Law, and International Relations. It is also recognized by the Cultural Perspective Goal Team that other

courses play a supporting role, including the core philosophy course (taken during the sophomore year).

Participation in extracurricular activities during the academic year and the summer supplements these traditional classroom experiences. Examples include a variety of independent academic development opportunities, providing excellent opportunities to become immersed in other cultures both around the world and in the United States (over 500 cadets participated in these during the summer of 2003, visiting 49 countries). An increasingly popular experiential learning program among cadets is Crossroads Africa. Cadets also participate in over 120 clubs at West Point, including the 2003 world champion Model United Nations Team and the Debate team, as well as a variety of national and international student competitions in science and engineering.

Military training programs also complement the academic coursework in developing a cadet's cultural perspective. The leadership training component of the cadet experience – wherein senior cadets are given increasing responsibilities over the mentorship and training of the younger cadets – demonstrates just how important cultural awareness is for effective leadership in today's world. The Values, Education and Training program, coordinated by the leadership of the U.S. Corps of Cadets, also contributes to the development of cadets' cultural perspective by convening brief seminars on issues of sexual harassment, discrimination, socialization, personal relationships and many others. Overall, the entire spectrum of academic and military programs at West Point contribute to the development of cadets' cultural perspective. In order to justify and maintain this admittedly labor-intensive, multidimensional approach, the leadership of the Military Academy is committed to examining the effectiveness of our efforts through a robust academic assessment system.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes at West Point

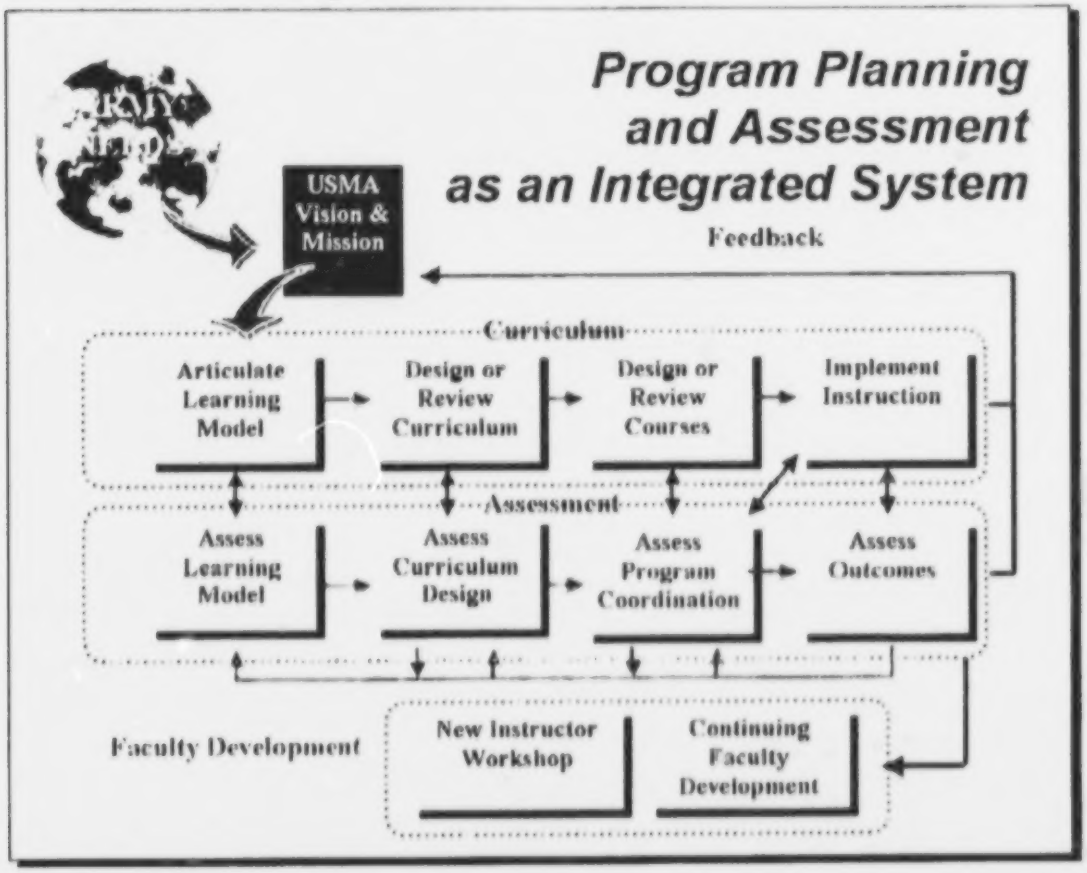
Student and program assessment activities at the Academy are framed by the Academic Program's ten goals and associated learning models, rather than focusing on the collection of data that reflect a cadet's expertise in a particular field of discipline. Assessment is used by senior administrators and faculty at West Point to manage curricular change through an informed, systematic process with a primary emphasis on program improvement. In this manner, they can anticipate and respond to changes in the Army and in higher education, thereby maintaining the currency and relevance of the Academic Program in preparing future Army officers. To enhance cadet learning and development, the assessment system must yield useful information to measure the Academic Program's outcomes and to respond to frequent inquiries from external agencies including the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, the United States Congress, and the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.

The assessment system at West Point informs and is informed by decisions regarding other academic functions. Assessment outcomes support decisions regarding curriculum structure, course design, and course integration. Similarly, the results offer input into decisions about the content and sequencing of faculty development activities that focus on creating and maintaining a cadet-centered learning environment. Furthermore, assessment results tell Academy leaders how well they are doing in meeting educational goals and point to areas in the Academic Program that require greater attention.

Academic assessment at West Point has four distinct processes that, taken together, integrate curriculum, instruction, and cadet achievement into a conceptual framework that is

consistent with the Academy's program goals (see Figure 3). These four processes are: assessment of the learning model, review and evaluation of program design, inspection and oversight of program implementation, and measurement of goal achievement.

Figure 3: West Point Assessment System



– Assess Learning Model. The first assessment process relates to curriculum design. As described earlier, curriculum design at the Academy proceeds from a learning model for each academic program goal. This learning model represents a theory about how cadets learn and develop with respect to particular types of educational outcomes. With a constant eye on supporting Army needs, learning models are derived in general from established theory and practice in higher education and in particular from the features of the disciplines that support specific goals. They provide a conceptual foundation to guide the selection and arrangement of experiences (e.g., courses in a curriculum) that are intended to promote achievement of educational goals. At a minimum, assessment of a learning model involves a periodic review of the model in light of relevant educational trends and locally obtained assessment results. These assessment efforts provide a test of the model.

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- Assess Program Design. In concept, articulation of a learning model occurs prior to program design, providing a basis for its organization that includes the selection of specific courses in a curriculum. A curriculum should conform to the articulated learning model, but the degree of specificity may vary from one content area to another. Program design assessment incorporates a peer review process to determine if a cluster of courses, or program threads, satisfies one or more of the Academic Program's goals. Using the learning model as a conceptual framework, reviewers determine the overall fit of the courses to the program goal through an examination of course objectives, substantive content, and interdisciplinary linkages among courses. This requires a close inspection of the course objectives for those identified as contributing to a particular academic program goal and a determination of their ability to satisfy the elements of the learning model.

- Assess Program Implementation. Course design and delivery of instruction logically follow from curriculum design. Course design includes the specification of course goals and objectives, the selection and sequencing of course content, the selection or preparation of instructional materials, the design of tests and other student-evaluation instruments, and the development of instructional strategies and lesson plans. The pedagogy includes instructing and evaluating cadets, giving them feedback, and providing remediation. What is involved in the assessment of program implementation? At a minimum, West Point's efforts in this area include a review of course syllabi, instructional materials, pedagogical practices, and student assessment methods to determine if aspects of these courses align with the program goal. An emphasis on the assessment principles encourage input from multiple sources, including students, faculty from within the Academy, and experts from outside the Academy. Assessment methods include an analysis of course products, student surveys, and classroom visitations.

- Assess Goal Achievement. Finally, there is assessment of goal achievement—what has been commonly termed "outcomes assessment." Effective goal assessment requires that a learning model be in place, that a program be designed in accordance with the learning model, and that the program be implemented in a manner consistent with the learning model. Without these prior conditions, interpretation of outcomes assessment data is problematic because no conceptual basis exists for making sense out of assessment findings. To be consistent with the assessment principles, we gather data on student performance at several points in time to assess development and performance. Whenever possible, several measurements are included from various sources such as surveys, tests, performance outcomes, and course products. Also, every effort is made to locate assessment indicators that are embedded in the curriculum to avoid placing additional requirements on cadets and faculty.

The assessment of goal achievement is perhaps the most visible and important component of this system, and involves the most time and effort. West Point annually surveys all freshmen and seniors to gather data on levels of confidence in their ability to achieve the Academic Program's goals. A similar post-graduate survey instrument is used to gather data from Academy graduates three years after graduation, and their supervisors are also surveyed. The quantitative data gathered through these efforts are combined with focus group interviews of battalion commanders and embedded indicators (e.g., course products such as exams, research papers, and

capstone projects) to produce a rich analysis of how well West Point graduates are achieving the goals set forth by the Academic Program.

Assessing Cultural Perspective

The annual surveys of West Point freshman and seniors includes several items related to cultural perspective. These items (by design) are very similar on both survey instruments, allowing for both cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis. As demonstrated in Table 1, cadets in both cohort groups indicate high levels of confidence toward their abilities in areas related to cultural perspective. Further, their self-reported confidence increases from their Freshman year to their Senior year, indicating a positive effect of West Point's academic, military and extracurricular programming.

Table 1: Survey Responses Related to Cultural Perspective

2003 Survey of 1st Class and 4th Class Cadets	4th Class (Freshmen) N=887	1st Class (Seniors) N=340
I am confident in my ability to analyze contemporary and historical events from different cultural perspectives	4.14	4.22
I am confident in my ability to apply my understanding of culture wherever I might be stationed or deployed around the world.	4.21	4.27
I am confident in my ability to understand diversity among people both at home and abroad.	4.26	4.34
I am confident in my ability to view the world from the perspective of someone in another culture.	4.17	4.25

(Scale: 5 = very confident; 1 = not at all confident)

The annual surveys of West Point graduates and their commanders also include similarly-worded items related to cultural perspective, again allowing for cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis. Graduates from the Class of 1999 and their commanders indicated high levels of confidence in their abilities to "work with soldiers from diverse cultural backgrounds" "learn about unfamiliar cultures" and "view the world from the perspective of another's culture". The commanders of these West Point graduates also indicated similarly high levels of confidence, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Survey Responses Related to Cultural Perspective

Class of 1999 Survey of Graduates and their Commanders	Graduates (N=380)	Commanders (N=196)
I am confident in my (his/her) ability to work with soldiers from diverse cultural backgrounds	4.67 (.55)	4.48 (.70)[1]
I am confident in my (his/her) ability to learn about unfamiliar cultures	4.64 (.53)	4.42 (.62)[1]
I am confident in my (his/her) ability to view the world from the perspective of another's culture	4.46 (.69)	4.31 (.73)[1]

(Scale: 5 = very confident; 1 = not at all confident)

The findings of these self-reported data are supported by views gathered annually from battalion commanders at the U.S. Army War College (AWC). When asked about West Point graduates in their command, these senior officers have typically given high marks regarding their abilities to effectively apply cultural understanding. For example, during the 2002 fall semester, AWC focus groups indicated that among the 107 West Point graduates that had served under the command of these officers, most demonstrated considerable awareness and management of cultural issues in a variety of international contexts. Several commanders noted that the Military Academy graduates were keenly interested in understanding local and ethnic cultures, to include learning the local language.

A final source of assessment data is gathered through a content analysis of cadet course products, otherwise known as "embedded indicators." Drawing on their understanding of expected cadet outcomes (as described earlier), the Cultural Perspective Goal Team developed an assessment rubric, articulating the standards of performance against which cadet course products can be measured. This rubric (see Figure 3) is structured around the four "What Graduates Can Do" statements described earlier in this paper. Two levels of performance are delineated for each statement – exceeds standard, and meets standard. Student course products – such as exams and research papers – are analyzed by teams of faculty to determine whether the cadet has demonstrated a cultural perspective at either level of performance, or if they have failed to meet the standard.

Figure 3: Cultural Perspective Goal Assessment Rubric

Demonstrate ability to:	*Analyze contemporary and historical events from different cultural perspectives*	*Apply understanding of culture in contexts around the world*	*Understand diversity among people at home and abroad*	*View the world from the perspective of someone in another culture*
Exceeds Standard	• Masterful ability to use knowledge of the scientific method to investigate human behavior. • Masterful ability to integrate insights with personal experiences to develop a personal approach to leading in a culturally diverse Army. • Displays masterful ability to analyze current and past events of the culture under study. • Demonstrates masterful ability to recognize a variety of similarities and differences in common cultural practices. • Demonstrates an exceptional understanding of cultural landscapes and faultlessly delineates their geographic distribution. • Possesses a masterful appreciation for the societal customs and traditional responses to change which have impacted the development of different world cultures. • Masterfully understands the values and preferences embodied in the Constitution and our system of military and civilian law.	• Demonstrates masterful ability to recognize a variety of similarities and differences in common cultural practices. • Demonstrates an exceptional understanding of cultural landscapes and faultlessly delineates their geographic distribution. • Completes a comprehensive regional analysis of climate, terrain, weather, and the cultural landscape. • Possesses a masterful understanding of the political, military, social, and religious systems of cultures around the world. • Possesses a masterful appreciation for different cultural perspectives on political, economic, and decision-making processes.	• Masterful ability to use knowledge of the scientific method to investigate human behavior. • Masterful ability to integrate insights with personal experiences to develop a personal approach to leading in a culturally diverse Army. • Demonstrates masterful ability to recognize a variety of similarities and differences in common cultural practices. • Demonstrates an exceptional understanding of cultural landscapes and faultlessly delineates their geographic distribution. • Masterfully understands analytical models for dealing with problems regarding societal and military order. • Masterfully understands an intelligent commitment to the values and preferences embodied in the Constitution and our system of military and civilian law. • Masterful ability to view events, issues, and choices in international relations from multiple perspectives • Possesses a masterful understanding of the criteria by which to judge, "How democratic is America?"	• Displays masterful ability to analyze current and past events of the culture under study. • Possesses a masterful appreciation for the societal customs and traditional responses to change which have impacted the development of different world cultures • Possesses a masterful understanding of the political, military, social, and religious systems of cultures around the world. • Masterful ability to view events, issues, and choices in international relations from multiple perspectives.

Figure 3: Cultural Perspective Goal Assessment Rubric (Cont.)

Demonstrate ability to:	*Analyze contemporary and historical events from different cultural perspectives*	*Apply understanding of culture in contexts around the world*	*Understand diversity among people at home and abroad*	*View the world from the perspective of someone in another culture*
Meets Standard	• Acceptable ability to use your knowledge of the scientific method to investigate human behavior. • Acceptably appreciate your ability to integrate insights with your personal experiences to develop a personal approach to leading in a culturally diverse Army. • Displays competence in analyzing current and past events of the culture under study. • Demonstrates acceptable ability to recognize a variety of similarities and differences in common cultural practices. • Demonstrates a functional understanding of cultural landscapes and delineates their geographic distribution. • Possesses an acceptable appreciation for the societal customs and traditional responses to change which have affected the development of different world cultures. • Acceptable understanding of the values and preferences embodied in the Constitution and our system of military and civilian law.	• Demonstrates acceptable ability to recognize a variety of similarities and differences in common cultural practices. • Demonstrates a functional understanding of cultural landscapes and delineates their geographic distribution. • Completes a regional analysis of climate, terrain, weather, and the cultural landscape. • Possesses an acceptable understanding of the political, military, social, and religious systems of cultures around the world. • Possesses an acceptable appreciation for different cultural perspectives on political, economic, and decision-making processes.	• Acceptable ability to use your knowledge of the scientific method to investigate human behavior. • Acceptably appreciate your ability to integrate insights with your personal experiences to develop a personal approach to leading in a culturally diverse Army. • Demonstrates acceptable ability to recognize a variety of similarities and differences in common cultural practices. • Demonstrates a functional understanding of cultural landscapes and delineates their geographic distribution. • Acceptable understanding of analytical models for dealing with problems regarding societal and military order. • Acceptable understanding of an intelligent commitment to the values and preferences embodied in the Constitution and our system of military and civilian law. • Acceptable ability to view events, issues, and choices in international relations from multiple perspectives. • Possesses an acceptable understanding of the criteria by which to judge, "How democratic is America?"	• Displays competence in analyzing current and past events of the culture under study. • Possesses an acceptable appreciation for the societal customs and traditional responses to change which have affected the development of different world cultures. • Possesses an acceptable understanding of the political, military, social, and religious systems of cultures around the world • Acceptable ability to view events, issues, and choices in international relations from multiple perspectives.

Together, these multiple assessment methods – and the data produced by them – provide the academic leadership at West Point with the ability to consistently monitor and improve the Academic Program. To this end, the institution established an Assessment Steering Committee, comprised of the chairs of each Goal Team, the Vice Dean for Education, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and the Assistant Dean for Academic Assessment. This committee meeting regularly to review the framework, implementation, and assessment data for each of the ten Academic Program Goals. Thus, the entire process is managed by the faculty, from the grassroots levels (in the classroom), at the design, implementation and assessment levels (by the multidisciplinary goal teams), and at the overarching conceptual level (by the Assessment Steering Committee).

Conclusion and Lessons Learned

In sum, West Point continually works to refine and improve student outcomes by creating a student-centered learning environment, driven by assessment data and a clear mandate for developing qualities that are needed in our graduates to ensure our nation's defense. Recognizing the obvious limitations of West Point's unique academic environment in terms of offering useful comparisons, there are some lessons to be drawn from these efforts that may inform those of other colleges and universities.

1. You must know your goals. An important lesson learned after years of engaging in these efforts is that projected outcomes are necessary before gathering useful data to inform strategies for change. In other words, an institution of higher education must have a clear sense of what its goals and objectives are before attempting to define meaningful assessment measures or collecting assessment data. Thus, a key question is *how important is cultural perspective to your institution?*

2. You must establish benchmarks and standards for student achievement of those goals. Curricular and assessment efforts at West Point are driven by an understanding of what knowledge, skills and abilities are required of future Army officers. The world we live in is increasingly characterized by technological, social, political, and economic change, resulting in situations that are dynamic and complex. Army officers will be confronted with situations that may have multiple issues at stake, with no single or dominant focus. Indeed, uncertainty and change are constants of our world and of the military profession; officers must anticipate the implications of such conditions for the future of our national security. Army officers must also respond effectively to the complexity and uncertainty that will characterize the variety of missions they will encounter in the years to come. Within the context of this dynamic national security environment, future officers must be able to provide intellectual and ethical leadership for the profession and the institution that is the United States Army. Consequently, the intellectual and ethical development of cadets remains paramount to realizing the Academy's mission. Understanding the expected performance of an institution's graduates – in relation to the institution's mission – is thus necessary before developing and implementing programs that will lead to the accomplishment of the institution's academic program goals.

3. You must have a multidisciplinary group of faculty develop the goals, create the definitions, identify the expected outcomes and how these will be measured, and articulate strategies that will enable the students to achieve these expected outcomes. Culture is inherently a multidisciplinary concept; no single discipline or field of study can honestly lay claim to being the exclusive source of a student's development in this cognitive dimension. Initial meetings of the Cultural Perspective Goal Team led to a variety of important questions, such as: What is the baseline experience by which all cadets gain a cultural perspective? What are the intervening steps, the milestones? The term culture is ill-defined; who has ownership of the terms? Solving the complex puzzles of how design, course content, and connections between core and elective elements of the curriculum contribute to desired student outcomes requires a great deal of collaboration among faculty from many disciplines.

West Point's Academic Program affords cadets a broad liberal education – similar to many other institutions – designed to develop versatile, creative, and critical thinkers who can adapt to the professional and ethical challenges that will confront them throughout their careers. However, unlike most colleges and universities, the implementation of this curriculum is supported by a highly structured, hierarchical organizational climate that encourages systems thinking, reflection, evaluation, and continual improvement. Indeed, the faculty at most institutions tend to resist the amount of collaboration and coordination required of such integrated curricular and assessment programs as found at West Point. Overcoming this resistance to cross-disciplinary collaboration is one of the key challenges for any multicultural initiative in higher education.

4. Process is everything. Consensus building is the key to success in academe. Although the service academies are infused with a "chain of command" military culture and the discipline that comes with it, they are also equipped with a uniquely strong blend of teamwork, independent thinking, and faculty entrepreneurship. When striving for academic excellence, commands may lead to obedience but not to the type of enthusiasm necessary for providing an engaging learning environment for both teachers and students. In an academic environment, top-down decisions do not get the level of organization-wide buy in needed for long-term execution. Thus at West Point, the Goal Teams play a vital role in the academic health of the institution, developing, managing and assessing the Academic program goals and providing crucial communication channels between the faculty and the senior administration. Clearly, administrative support at all levels is essential. And academic program improvement initiatives must be framed by clearly-defined institutional mission and objectives. But without consensus and collaboration among the faculty, any real curricular change is virtually impossible.

5. A student-centered environment leads to student achievement. By creating a student-centered learning environment, West Point has made a clear commitment to enabling its cadets for success. Teaching is the primary role of all faculty and staff at the Academy, with research and service playing supporting roles in supporting a quality learning environment. While research universities like Yale or Stanford may have their "faculty stars" (as defined by research productivity), West Point rewards those who excel first in the realm of teaching and cadet development. Cadets at the Academy respond well to this environment, as reflected in the outstanding educational accomplishments for which West Point is known.

In sum, the approach described in this paper – emphasizing faculty collaboration, shared responsibility, and multidisciplinarity – offers useful ideas for other institutions who seek to develop their students' appreciation and understanding of culture. Gaining this appreciation and understanding has never been more important than in today's globally interdependent environment. Our institutions of higher learning must equip our future generations of leaders with the ability to respond effectively to the complex political, social and economic challenges we face in the modern era of globalization. Our success – or failure – to do so will surely have a dramatic impact on the evolution of mankind.

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